

Via Federal Express

Sam Kazran 1531 Harrington Park Drive Jathannville, FL 32225 JUL 1 8 2010

Re: MUR 6054

Dear Mr. Kazran:

Based on information ascertained in the normal course of carrying out its supervisory responsibilities, on June 23, 2009, the Federal Election Commission found reason to believe that you knowingly and willfully violated 2 U.S.C. § 441f, and instituted an investigation in this matter.

After causidating all the unidence available to the Commission, the Office of the Guardal Causal is prepared to resonanced that the Commission find probable cause to believe that a knowing and willful violation has occurred.

The Commission may or may not approve the General Counsel's recommendation. Submitted for your review is a brief stating the position of the General Counsel on the legal and factual issues of the case. Within 15 days of your receipt of this notice, you may file with the Secretary of the Commission a brief (ten copies if possible) stating your position on the issues and replying to the beat of the General Counsel. (These neglect of same brief should also be forwarded to the Office of the General Counsel. Counsel, if possible.) The General Counsel's brief and any brief that you may submit will be counseled by the Commission before propositing to a water on whether there is probable cause to brilieve a violation has gourned.

If you are unable to file a responsive brief within 15 days, you may submit a written request for an extension of time. All requests for extensions of time must be submitted in writing five days prior to the due date, and good cause must be demonstrated. In addition, the Office of the General Counsel ordinarily will not give extensions beyond 20 days and an appropriate tolling agreement will be required.

You may also compared an small hunring before the Commission. See "Promodumi Rules for Probable Come Hearings," 72 Feet Rog. 649 M (New. 19, 2607). Hearings are voluntary, and an adverse inference will be deswn by the Commission heard on a respondent's decision net to request such a hearing. Any request for a hearing must be

MUR 6054 Sam Kazran Page 2

submitted along with your reply brief and must state with specificity why the hearing is being requested and ushat insues the respondent capacits to addison. The Commission will notify you within 30 days of your sequest for a hearing as to whether or not the request has been granted.

Should you have any questions, please contact Jack Gould, the attorney assigned to this matter, at (202) 694-1650.

Sincerely,

Thomasenia P. Duncan General Counsel

BY: Kathleen M. Guith

Acting Associate General Counsel

for Enforcement

Enclosure Brief

BEFORE THE FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION					
2 3 4 5	In the Matter of) Sam Kazran) MUR 6054				
6 7 8	GENERAL COUNSEL'S BRIEF				
9	GENERAL COURSEL'S BRIEF				
10	I. INTRODUCTION				
11	The Federal Election Commission ("Commission") ascertained information in the				
12	ordinary course of carrying out its supervisory acsponsibilities that 11-2001 LLC d/b/a Hyundai				
13	of North Jacksonville ("HNJ") reimbursed contributions to Vern Buchsnan for Congress				
14	("VBFC"). At all relevant times Sam Kazran ("Kazran") was the president of HNJ.				
15	On June 23, 2009, the Commission found reason to believe that Kazran knowingly and				
16	willfully violated 2 U.S.C. § 441f by assisting HNJ in making contributions to VBFC in the				
17	names of HNJ employees and their relatives. See 11 C.F.R. § 110.4(b)(1)(iii); Kazran Factual				
18	and Legal Analysis in MUR 6054. Evidence obtained during the investigation, including				
19	documents from HNJ and testimony from Kazran, shows that Kazran knowingly and willfully				
20	used HNJ funds to reimburse his employees and others for contributions they made to VBFC,				
21	and thereby assisted HNJ in making ilitigal contributions in the name of anotiter. See 11 C.F.R.				
22	§ 110.4(b)(1)(iii). Accordingly, the Office of Charcani Caussel intends to recommand that the				
29	Commission find probable cause to believe that Sam Kazran knowingly and willfully violated				
24	2 U.S.C. § 441f.				
25	II. BACKGROUND				
26 27	In 2004, Kazran acquired a forty-nine percent (49%) interest in HNJ from Vernon G.				
28	Buchanan ("Buchanan"), who continued to hold a controlling fifty-one percent (51%) interest is				
70	UNI See Kerren denosition ("Kerren Deno") at 5.6. Kerren subsequently hought out				

- 1 Buchanan's interest in HNJ and by 2008 was the sole owner of HNJ. Kazran Depo at 68.
- 2 In 2006, Buchanan was elected to Congress and he has remained in office to date. His principal
- 3 campaign committee is Vern Buchanan for Congress ("VBFC").
- 4 According to Kazran, starting in 2005, Buchanan instructed him to raise funds for
- 5 Buchanan's political campaigns, and directed him to reimburze the contributors using dealership
- 6 funds.

A. Contributions Reimbursed with HNJ funds in 2005

- 8 Kazran testified that in November 2005, Buchanan told Kazran that he had to gather as
- 9 much money as possible and that "I'm going to put your name on \$50,000 that you've got to
- raise by the end of the quarter." Kazran Depo at 11. Kazran arranged for employees to
- 11 contribute to VBFC and for their contributions to be reimbursed with HNJ funds. Kazran Depo
- 12 at 21. In sum, HNJ reimbursed \$16,800 in contributions in 2005, all dated November 29, 2005.
- 13 Kazran testified that Buchanan told him to reimburse these employee contributions with
- 14 HNJ funds: "And he specifically told me get someone you trust and run it through the
- 15 corporation." Kazzan Depo at 21. Kazzan explained that "run it through the cosposation" meant

¹ Kazran also testified that Buchanan instructed him to have contributors make contributions from joint checking accounts to raise the level of their contributions. Kazran Depo at 22, 28. Before Kazran made his first contribution to VBFC, Buchanan saked if Kazran and his wife were on the same checking account, and when Kazran stated that his wife wrote the checks, Buchanan said that Kazran's contribution could be approximately \$9,000. Kazran Depo at 11. Similarly, when discussing contributions that he reimbursed that were made in the names of Vincent and Patricia Sams, Kazran explained that he thought Vincent wrote a check that had both their names on it and "That was one of the things that I was told you got to make sure there's two people on the check to get the most amount." Ad at 28.

According to the FEC disclosure database, on July 25, 2005, Kazan (also identified on disclosure reports as Sam lithezzawan) contributed \$4,200. Kazzan testified that he did not reimbuse himself using quapany funds for his contribution to VBPC. Kazzan Depo at 13. The FBC disclosure database also indicates that Sam Khazzahan and his wife, Miryam Khazzahan, each soutributed \$4,600 to VBPC on September 27, 2007, for a total of \$9,200. These contributions were also not reimbured.

1 that Kazran should have employees write personal checks and then give them back the money

2 using dealership funds. Kazran Depo at 14, 37, 72.

Joshua Farid, Kazran's business partner and brother-in-law, described to us in an interview a conversation that he overheard between Kazran and Buchanan relating to reimbursed contributions by FINJ employees. Farld stated that this conversation occurred in 2005, just bethers Kaeran salied him to contribute to the Buchanan carrantign. According to Farid, he was at the HINJ declarability one day and saw Kazran venicing out of the "sales tower," apparently engaged in a conversation on his cell phone. When Kazran saw Farid, he motioned him over to where he was standing, and Farid then followed Kazran to his office. Once in the office, Kazran held the phone away from his ear so Farid could hear the conversation. Farid said that he recognized the voice to be Buchanan's. Farid said that Buchanan and Kazran were discussing campaign contributions. Buchanan stated that he needed Kazran to raise \$50,000 in contributions. Kazran told Buchanan that he had already contributed the maximum allowable contribution to the campaign. Buchanan that he had already contributed the maximum allowable contribution to the campaign. Buchanan then told Kazran to have his employees contribute to the campaign and then reimburse them for their countributions with HEU famils. Farid recalled that Buchanan used the term "run it through the company" when instructing Kazran how to reimburse his employees.

With the exception of Kazran's own first contribution to VBFC, all of the HNJ employee contributions he arranged in 2005 were reimbursed using company funds. Kazran Depo at 27, 33, 53. Kazran contacted his office manager, Diana Smith, and his controller, Gail Lephart. He instructed them to write a personal check to VBFC and then to reimburse themselves. Kazran

VBFC disclosed that Farid and his wife contributed \$8,400 to VBFC on March 31, 2006.

VBFC disclosed that Sam Khazrawan a.k.a. Sam Kazran contributed \$4,200 to VBFC on July 25, 2005.

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

- 1 Depo at 21. As controller, Lephart is the dealership executive who could issue checks. Kazran
- 2 Depo at 21. The first time Kazran told Lephart to use dealership checks to reimburse
- 3 contributions, he told her that they would be getting money back from Buchanan. Kazran Depo
- 4 at 22. "I said, [']I don't know when, he just asked me to do it.[']" Kazran Depo at 22.
- 5 Lephart stated during an interview that just before she made a contribution to VBFC on
- 6 November 29, 2005, Kamm walked into her affice talking on his cell phone. Leplant recalled
- 7 Kassan stating something close to "Vern, I'll handle it now," and Lephant assumed he was
- 8 talking to Buchanan.

According to Lephart, immediately after ending the call, Kazran told Lephart that he needed her to make a contribution to VBFC. Lephart stated that Kazran also specified the amount she needed to contribute, which was greater than \$7,000, using a personal check. Kazzan also said that she should reimburse herself for the full amount of the contribution using HNJ funds. Further, Kazzan asked Lephart to find other HNJ employees to make similar contributions and to reimburse those contributions, as well as her own, through the HNJ payroll account. Kazzan instructed Lephart to send the contributions by evernight delivery to VBFC. She did not recall whether Kazzan told her that Budanaan instructed him to reimburse employee contributions to VBFC.

Lephant contributed in her own name and her husband's name. Lephant also recalled creating the reimbursement check for Diana Smith. The evidence in this matter shows that the following HNJ employees made contributions in the following amounts to VBFC in 2005 using HNJ funds, on the following date listed by VBFC on its disclosure reports:

⁴ Lephart stated that she created entries in the HNJ payroll account listing the reimbursements as salary payments, which bioladed income tax withholding.

. 1

1 2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

112

13

14

15

16

Lephart, Ernest C.	11/29/2005	\$2,100.00
Lephart, Ernest C.	11/29/2005	\$2,100.00
Lephart, Gayle	11/29/2005	\$2,100.00
Lephart, Gayle	11/29/2005	\$2,100.00
Smith, Diana M.	11/29/2005	\$2,100.00
Smith, Diana M.	11/29/2005	\$2,100.00
Smith, Gary W.	11/29/2005	\$2,100.00
Smith, Gary W.	11/29/2005	\$2,100.00

According to Kazran, HNJ gave employees the seimbursements on the same day as their contributions because they did not have enough money in their accounts to one the contributions. Kazran Depo at 27-28.

B. Contributions Reimburged with HNJ funds in 2006

Kazran reimbursed another \$16,800 in contributions made to VBFC with HNJ funds in June 2006, reimbursements that he testified he made at the direction of Buchanan. Kazran also testified that he reimbursed contributions made by his business partner Vincent Sams and his wife. See Kazran Depo at 27-28. VBFC disclosure reports show that contributions were made in the names of Sams and his wife totaling \$7,500 in January 2006.

Farification of their contributions. Kazzan also reimbursed his brother, Eric Khazzavan and his wife.

⁵ Leighart stated that she did not recall how the 2006 contributions were reimbursed by HNJ, including those of the Farids.

forth in the chart below.

Khazravan, Heidi

Khazravan, Heidi

In sum, the evidence shows that HNJ reimbursed \$32,700 in contributions in 2006, as set

Sams, Vincent G. 1/02/2006 **\$2**,100.00 1/02/2006 Same_Vincent G. **\$2,100.00** Sams, Patricia G. 1/02/2006 \$2,100.00 Sams, Patricia G. 1/02/2006 **\$1,200.00** Farid, Atefah K., 3/31/2006 **\$2**,100.00 Farid, Atefah K. 3/31/2006 **\$2,100.00** Farid, Joshua 3/31/2006 \$2,100.00 Farid, Joshua 3/31/2006 **\$2,**100.00 Cutatia, Dorson A. 6/28/2006 **\$2**,100.00 Cutaia, Dorgan A. 6/28/2006 **\$2,100.00** Cutaia, Joseph P... \$2,100.00 6/28/2006 Cutaia, Joseph P. 6/28/2006 \$2,100.00 Khazravan, Eric 6/28/2006 \$2,100.00 Khazravan, Eric 6/28/2006 **\$2**,100.00

6/28/2006

6/28/2006

\$2,100.00

\$2,100.00

34

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

2

Kazran testified that there was a connection between the \$16,800 in contributions made by HNJ employees and their relatives in June 2006 and a transaction he was negotiating with Buchanan at that time. Kazran Depu at 34-36. Dodge had awarded a new dealership to Razran at a location called Gwinnett Place, but under tils pastnership agreement, Buchanan had the right of first redams. Kazran Depu at 53. According to Kazran, Buchanan used that right to force Kazran to give Buchanan 51% ownership in Gwinnett Dodge. Kazran Depu at 53. When Kazran later offered to purchase Buchanan's share of Gwinnett Dodge, Buchanan told Kazran that he would have to pay \$1,000,000 to Buchanan. Kazran wanted to pay a lower amount, and he wanted to pay in installments because he did not have the money. Kazran Depo at 13, 35. In exchange for agreeing to allow Kazran to purchase Buchanan's share in installments, Buchanan wanted Kazran

- 1 to commit money to VBFC. Kazran Depo at 53.6 Buchanan told Kazran, "by Friday [June 30,
- 2 2006] I want you to raise [\$25,000 or \$50,000]." Kazran Depo at 13.

That's when he told me, he said — in fact, that Tuesday before the end of the month in June, I bet you its one of the close of time, because he told, he said, Friday is the end and I need you to raise - - I don't remember if it was \$25,000 or \$50,000. And he said, if you do that, then I'm going to take care of that payment. So instead of paying him all at once, he agreed to let me make payments on his buyout portion, but I had to raise that money.

•3

Kazran Depa at 35; see also id. at 13.

According to Kazuan, when he explained that he did not have the money Buchanan wanted, Buchanan replied, "Well, don't you have somebady at the dealership you can trust? Just run it through the corporation." Kazran Depo at 36; see also id. at 13. The evidence in this matter shows that two HNJ employees and their spouses each contributed \$4,200 to VBFC on June 28, 2006, for a total of \$16,800, contributions that were reimbursed by HNJ.

In an interview, Joshua Farid largely corroborated Kazran's account of this discussion with Buchanan about Gwinnett Dodge. Farid stated that he witnessed a conversation between Kazran and Buchanan regarding political contributions to Buchanan's congressional campaign and engoing negotiations between Buchanan and Kazran regarding \$360,080 that Kazran needed to pur Buchanan for a Dodge dealership. Fanid stated that in exchange for Kazraz being permitted to pay by installment author than one lump sum payment, Bushanan asked Kazran to provide VBFC with either \$25,000 or \$50,000. Farid stated that based on his conversation with Kazran, he understood that Buchanan wanted Kazran to again solicit employees to contribute to

⁶ According to Buchanan's disclosure reports filed with the House of Papresentatives, Buchanan purchased his share of Gwinnett, L.L.C, on January 12, 2806. Vern Buchanan House of Representatives Financial Disclosure Reports dated May 14, 2007. Kazran and Buchanan concluded their agreement for Kazran to purchase Buchanan's share on June 26, 2006. Kazran Bepe at 34-35; Yann Bushanan Hausa of Representatives Financial Bischnuse Reports dated May 14, 2007.

⁷ The Tuesday before the end of the month of June in 2006 was June 27, 2006, and the close of the reporting period that was included in the July 2006 Quarterly Repeats to the Commission was Friday, June 30, 2006.

18

MUR 6054 General Counsel's Brief Sam Kazzan

1	his campaign and reimburse them for their contributions through the company. Farid told
2	Kazran that he thought that what Buchanan asked him to do was improper.
3	C. Contributions Reimbursed with HNJ funds in 2007
4	HNJ funds were again used to reimburse contributions in 2007, totaling \$18,400.
5	According to Kazran, Buchanan always told Kazran that he was counting on him as the only
6	person who could "raise this kind of money." Kauran Depo at 53.
7	According to Gail Lephart, Sam Kazran approached her again in 2007 and explained that
8	employees needed to contribute to VBFC and be reimbursed through the company. Lephart told
9	Kazran that she was concerned about company funds being used to reimburse contributions, but
10	he only responded with a shrug. Kazran corroborated Lephart's statement. Kazran Depo at 22.
11	Lephart asked HNJ employee Stephanie Champ to contribute more than \$8,400,
12	assuming that Champ would contribute jointly with another person as Lephart had done with her
13	husband. According to Lephart, someone at VBFC later advised her that Champ could not
14	contribute more than \$2,300 (per election). Consequently, Lephart approached HNJ employee
15	Joe Cutaia, who agreed to comribute to VEFC and be reimbutsed. Champ gave the
16	reisabursement she received from Lexibert to Cirtain. The following HNJ amployees and family

members made contributions with HNJ funds on December 31, 2007:

1 2 3

Cutaia, Doreen A.	12/31/2007	\$2,300.00
Cutais, Dorcen A.	12/31/2007	\$2,300.00
Champ, Stephanie K.	12/31/2007	\$2,300.00
Champ, Stephanie K.	12/31/2007	\$2,300.00
Lephart, Exnest C.	12/31/2007	\$2,300.00
Lephart, Ernest C.	12/31/2007	\$2,300.00
Lephart, Gayle	12/31/2007	\$2,300.00
Lephart, Gayle	12/31/2007	\$2,300.00

Lephart stated that the HNJ funds used for the reimburnement of these contributions came from the dealership's operating account.

D. Total Reimbursements at HNJ

Kazzan testified that he believed that the total value of all reimbursements using HNJ funds was very close to or over \$100,000. Kazzan Depo at 48-49. The investigation in this matter has located a total of \$67,900 in reimbursed contributions to VBFC using HNJ funds: \$16,800 in 2005, \$32,700 in 2086, and \$14,400 in 2007. This \$67,900 figure is based on Kazzan's testimany about the reimbursed contributions, which somesponds closely with Kazzan's estimate in an arnall that he sent to John Teach, the vice president and secretary of all of Buchanan's automotive companies, on October 5, 2008, in which Kazzan estimated that the amount of reimbursed contributions, minus unspecified credit card contributions, was \$70,000. See email from Sam Kazzan to John Tosch, Buchanan's corporate CEO, dated October 5, 2008 in Kazzan Documents at FEC000001.

1	As for Buchanan, he testified that he could not remember "one way or the other" whether
2	he asked Kazran to fundraise. Buchanan Deposition at 89. On the other hand, Buchanan also
3	testified that, "Tam sure I made it clear to him that you can't reimburse contributions." Id. at 93.
4	When asked when he would have made it clear to Kazran, Buchanan testified that he did not
5	know but he was "sure any time I would ask him, because he would ask me what the rules are, so
6	I wanted to make sure he undensthod that." Id. at 93-94. Becomm specifically denied advising
7	Kazasa to find someone he trusted at HNJ and reimbursing contributions to VBFC. Id. at 98-99.
8	III. I.RGAL ANALYSIS
10	The Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, as amended ("Act"), defines "contribution"
11	as anything of value made by any person for the purpose of influencing any election for federal
12	office. 2 U.S.C. § 431(8)(A)(i). Under the Act, no person shall make a contribution in the name
13	of another person or knowingly permit his or her name to be used to effect such a contribution.
14	2 U.S.C. § 441f; 11 C.F.R. § 110.4(b)(1)(i). This prohibition further provides that no person
15	shall knowingly help or assist any person in making a contribution in the name of another.
16	See 11 C.F.R. § 110.4(5)(1)(iii). Contributions in the name of amother include giving money, all
17	or part of which is provided to those entributes by another person (the true contributes) without
18	disclosing the source of money to the recipient candidate or committee at the time the
19	contribution is made. 11 C.F.R. § 110.4(b)(2)(i).
20	Kazran admitted that he instructed his employees to make contributions to VBFC and
21	that he told HNJ's comptroller to reimburse those employees using HNJ funds. Mr. Kazran also
22	admitted that he used HNJ funds to reimburse his brother and business partners and their spouses
23	for their contributions to VBFC. By using HNJ funds to reimburse contributions to VBFC,
24	Kazran made HNJ the actual contributor to VBFC. The employees and other individuals who

MUR 6054 General Counsel's Brief Sam Kazzan

1 were reimbursed with HNJ funds were merely the conduits for HNJ's contributions, whose 2 names were used to disguise the true source of the contributions. Accordingly, the evidence 3 shows that Kazran knowingly assisted HNJ in making contributions in the names of others in violation of 2 U.S.C. § 441f. 4 .5 The investigation further revealed that Sam Kazran's violation was knowing and willful. 6 The phrase "knowing and willful" indicates that "acts were commutated with a knowledge of all 7 the relevant facts and a recognition that the action is prohibited by law...." H.R. Rot. 94-917 at 8 3-4 (Mar. 17, 1976) (reprinted in Legislative History of Federal Election Campaign Act 9 Amendments of 1976 at 803-04 (Aug. 1977)); see also National Right to Work Comm. v. FEC. 10 716 F.2d 1401, 1403 (D.C. Cir. 1983) (citing AFL-CIO v. FEC, 628 F.2d 97, 98, 101 (D.C. Cir. 11 1980) for the proposition that "knowing and willful" means "defiance' or 'knowing, conscious, 12 and deliberate flaunting' [sic] of the Act"); United States v. Hopkins, 916 F.2d 207, 214-15 (5th 13 Cir. 1990). The Hopkins court also held that taking steps to disguise the source of funds used in 14 illegal activities might reasonably be explained as a "motivation to evade lawful obligations." 15 Hopkins, \$16 F.2d at 213-14 (citing Ingram-v. United States, 360 U.S. 672, 679 (1959)) (internal 16 quoletium amittei). 17 Kaszan testided that he did not know that what Bunkanan instrutted him to do was illeval 18 and that if Buchauen had told him it was illegal he would not have gotten involved. Kazran 19 Depo at 87-88. However, the undisputed circumstances indicate that Kazran's violation was in 20 fact knowing and willful. Kazran, president of HNJ and a business partner of Buchanan, directed 21 a subordinate, the HNJ controller, to write the reimbursement checks which in many cases were 22 given to the employees on the same day they wrote contribution checks to VBFC. Thus, Kazran

was aware that he made HNJ the actual contributor, not his employees and business partners and

- 1 their spouses who wrote checks in amounts he directed to VBFC. This was no isolated
- 2 incident: Kazran carried out this arrangement over the course of three years, 2005-2007, for a
- 3 total amount of \$67,900 in contributions made in the name of another.
- 4 Kazran was also aware, according to his testimony, of Buchanan's desire to show that
- 5 other people, not just Buchanan himself, supported Buchanan's campaign with centributions.
- 6 See Kazzan Repo at 44. Even if Buchstean directed Kassan to relativese nontributions to his
- 7 campaign or had leverage over Kazzan as his majority partner or the holder of Kazzaz debt,
- 8 Kazran did not have license to break the law.
- 9 Kazzan was also aware that VBFC would report the contributions in the names of HNJ
- 10 employees and family members, not HNJ. See id. at 32-33. Therefore, Kazran took steps to
- 11 disguise the source of funds used in illegal activities that might reasonably be explained as a
- "motivation to evade lawful obligations." See Hopkins, 916 F.2d at 213-14.
- 13 The evidence in this matter further shows that Kazran's business partner and controller
- 14 raised questions about the propriety of the reimbursements. Josh Farid told Kazran that what
- 15 Buchanan asked Kazzan to do was improper. Gail Lephant told Razzan that she was concerned
- about company funds being used to reimbuse contributions, but Kazran only responded with a
- 17 shrue. By continuing an activity that his own appeciates opined was improper, with his likely
- 13 awareness that the activity involved deceptive asporting, is further evidence that Kazran's
- 19 conduct was knowing and willful.
- 20 In sum, the evidence in this matter shows that Sam Kazran was aware that he was
- 21 violating the law by causing HNJ to make contributions in the names of others. This Office is
- .22 therefore prepared to recommend that the Commission find probable cause to believe that Sam
- 23 Kazzan knowingly and willfully violated 2 U.S.C. § 441f.

1 2 3

4

5 6 7

9 10

11 12 13

14

15

16

22

23 24 25

26 27

IV. GENERAL COUNSEL'S RECOMMENDATION

Find probable cause to believe that Sam Kazran knowingly and willfully violated 2 U.S.C. § 441f.

1-16-10 Date

Thomasenia P. Duncan
General Counsel

Stephen A. Gura

Deputy Associate General Counsel for Enforcement

Mark Allen

Assistant General Counsel

Jack Gould Attorney